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ABSTRACT

As part of a major effort to raise student achievement, Colorado schools have been putting into place rigorous academic content standards that spell out the skills and knowledge students should acquire in core subject areas. This guide contains information about part of this effort, the new Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP), to help teachers explain scores to parents and students. The CSAP will be the first examinations administered using a common yardstick to measure student achievement across the state. It is based on the state model content standards developed by Colorado educators and community members. Benchmarks specify what students should know by the end of 4th, 8th, and 11th grades. The CSAP is a standards-based test that will measure and report what each student has actually learned. School districts will receive results for individual students, their schools, and the district as a whole. Scores will be reported as "Advanced," "Proficient," "Partially Proficient," and "Unsatisfactory." Each proposed test question is reviewed by panels of teachers and assessment experts and panels of community members and parents. Examples of test questions are included, and some questions with answers clarify details about the testing program. (SLD)

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How Are Colorado Students and Schools Measuring Up?

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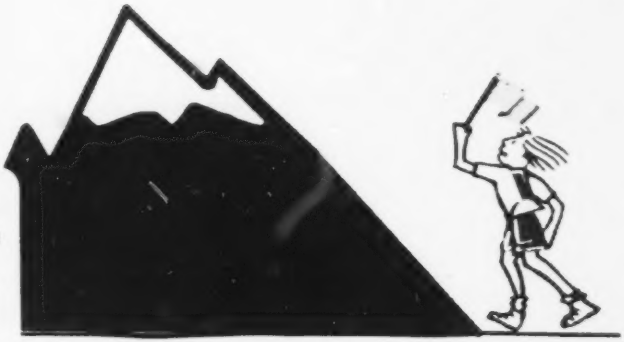
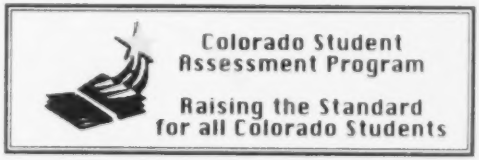


A Teacher's Guide to the *Colorado Student Assessment Program*



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How Are Colorado Students and Schools Measuring Up?

A Teacher's Guide to the Colorado Student Assessment Program

Developed by:

CONNECT
Colorado Statewide Systemic Initiative for Mathematics and Science

Teaming for Results
Business Leaders Committed to Raising Standards for Colorado Students and Schools

In cooperation with
The Colorado Department of Education

The Colorado Student Assessment Program
A Teacher's Guide

As part of a major effort to raise student achievement, Colorado schools have been putting into place rigorous academic content standards. These standards spell out the skills and knowledge that all students should acquire in core subject areas.

As educators, you know that setting content standards is the first step to helping students learn more. Curriculum, instructional practices, and assessments must also be aligned to support the standards.

Curriculum revision and professional development are primarily taking place at the district level. In order to have a comprehensive picture of how well students are achieving, assessment must take place a different levels.

This guide contains information about the new Colorado Student Assessment Program. When the results are released, educators will be on the front-lines explaining scores to parents and the public. The information in this guide is intended to assist you in this task.

This Is A Test. . .

Classroom Assessment

The most complete form of assessment takes place in the classroom. Teachers assess students on a daily and weekly basis. Whenever you administer a unit test or quiz, grade homework, or just look at kids' faces to see if they are confused, you are assessing how well students are grasping the concepts.

Classroom assessment determines the grades a student receives and also gives teachers valuable information about where students' strengths lie and where they may need special help.

District Level Testing

Most school districts regularly test students in certain grade levels to find out how well they are achieving across the district. Some use a "norm-referenced" test such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

Many districts are already implementing standards-based testing to evaluate accurately how well students are meeting district standards.

Under new law, all districts will be required to report student achievement on content standards.

. . .This Is Only A Test

Statewide Testing

Knowing how well students and schools are performing statewide is of great interest to educators, parents, business leaders, community members, and elected officials. It's no surprise that district test scores, SAT and ACT scores, and national exam results are front page news. Large-scale assessment results are one way to let the public know that students are receiving a quality education.

The Colorado Department of Education is assessing student performance each spring in selected grades and subject areas.

The Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) will be the first exams administered, using a common yardstick, to measure student achievement across the state. Such statewide testing, in order to yield fair and accurate results, must be based on common criteria or standards. CSAP is based on the state model content standards that were developed by Colorado educators and community members.

Psst! It's Not A Secret

The content of the state assessment is not a secret. What students are expected to learn is spelled out in the state model content standards. Under each general standard are grade level expectations--or benchmarks.

These benchmarks specify what students should know by the end of 4th, 8th, and 11th grade. Test questions are based on the standards and benchmarks. So, even though you will not have access to specific test questions, the standards and benchmarks tell you what the questions will address.

Testing Schedule

	Spring 1997	Spring 1998	Spring 1999	Spring 2000	Spring 2001
3rd graders		reading	reading	reading	reading
4th graders	reading & writing	reading & writing	reading & writing	reading & writing	reading & writing
5th graders			mathematics	mathematics	mathematics
8th graders				mathematics	mathematics & science

There Is A Difference

Unlike large-scale assessments you have seen in the past, CSAP is ***not*** a norm-referenced test. CSAP is a standards-based test. There is a big difference.

Norm-referenced tests are designed to provide information about how well students are learning as compared to others.

Norm-referenced tests do not yield information about how well students are meeting district or state content standards. Such tests are not necessarily based on your course objectives or curriculum.

A norm-referenced test score only tells you how far above or below average a student performed. That information can be useful in some situations, but isn't very helpful in letting teachers find out what exactly students know.

In contrast, CSAP will measure and report what each student has actually learned about the subject being assessed.

As teachers, you will also have information about how well the students in your class did in certain areas and where students need to improve--which can be a valuable instructional tool.

Why Would Anyone Want To Be A 4th Grade Teacher?

It is important to remember that the statewide assessments are ***cumulative*** exams. The 4th grade reading and writing test is based on what students should have learned from kindergarten through 4th grade, not just what they learned ***in*** the 4th grade.

What students have learned up to the time of the assessment and how well students do are the result of many factors, including all previous instruction from other teachers and schools. CSAP is an assessment of students and schools, not of teachers.

An Honest Look

It's realistic to expect results to be generally low for the first few years of testing. This has been the case in other states that have conducted standards-based assessments.

Results may be low at first because

- content standards are relatively new to Colorado schools. Most teachers and schools have not been teaching to the standards for very long.

- content standards are meant to raise the bar for student achievement. They are deliberately set at rigorous levels and may present a substantial challenge for teachers and students.

Keep in mind that first time test results will produce baseline data--or reference points for future years of testing.

CSAP is an assessment of students and schools *not* of individual teachers.

The Results

School districts will receive results for individual students, their schools, and the district as a whole.

Scores will be reported in terms of four performance levels: Advanced, Proficient, Partially Proficient, and Unsatisfactory. The performance levels are set by Colorado teachers and assessment experts after student work and preliminary test results have been examined.

The Colorado Department of Education will also release statewide results. The law requires that reports are disaggregated for gender, race, ethnicity, and separate disabling conditions.

Test Development

The tests have been developed by Colorado teachers, district assessment and curriculum directors, and CTB/McGraw-Hill, the test publisher.

Each proposed test question is reviewed by several different panels made up of Colorado teachers and assessment experts who check for grade and content appropriateness.

Two other panels, made up of parents, community members, and business leaders, review each test question to ensure it is fair and acceptable. Only if a question passes these screenings is it included on the state assessment.

Examples

The tests include multiple choice, short answer, and performance assessments. Here are examples of actual test questions that appeared on the 4th grade reading and writing assessment administered in the spring of 1997.

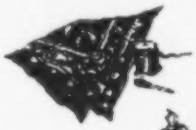
Directions

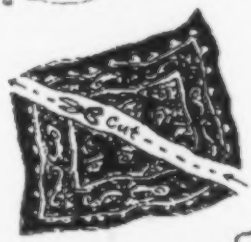
Fleas can be real pests for dogs and other animals. Read this article about making a flea collar. Then do Numbers 1 through 10.

Pet Collar

by Gwen Diehn and Terry Krautwurst
Illustrations by Pam Fullerton

FLEAS SEEM TO HATE the herb pennyroyal, although humans and animals find it very sweet smelling. This collar stuffed with dried pennyroyal will help keep pesky fleas off your pooch.



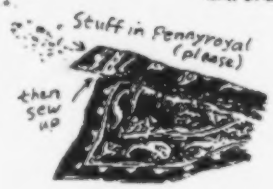


What You'll Need:

cotton bandanna
matching thread
sewing needle
dried pennyroyal
(available in health-food stores)

What to Do:

1. Cut the bandanna diagonally into two triangles. Make sure one side of each triangle is long enough to tie comfortably around your dog's neck.
2. Fold over the long edge by about 3 inches. Sew along the cut edge, creating a hollow tube. Sew up one end and leave the other end open.
3. Stuff dried pennyroyal into the opening.
4. Sew up the opening.
5. Tie snugly—but not too tightly—around your dog's neck, then watch those fleas flee!



"Pet Collar" adapted from *Nature Crafts for Kids* by Gwen Diehn and Terry Krautwurst, text copyright ©1992 by Gwen Diehn and Terry Krautwurst, art copyright ©1992 by Pam Fullerton. Reprinted by permission of Sterling Publishing Company, Inc and the artist.

1 According to the article, the purpose of the pennyroyal collar is to make

- ○ the pennyroyal dry up
- ○ the dog smell sweet
- ● the fleas jump off the dog
- ○ the fleas jump onto the collar

2 Which of these sentences states the main idea of the article?

- ○ Sew along the cut edge, creating a hollow tube.
- ○ Cut the bandanna diagonally into two triangles.
- ○ Humans and animals find pennyroyal very sweet smelling.
- ● Dried pennyroyal will help keep pesky fleas off your pooch.

3 According to the article, which of these statements is true?

- ● Fleas seem to dislike the herb pennyroyal.
- ○ Fleas like the smell of pennyroyal.
- ○ The pennyroyal should be wet to give off a smell.
- ○ The bandanna should be tied loosely to hold the pennyroyal

4 According to the article, which supplies are needed to make a flea collar?

- ○ bandanna, thread, needle, flea powder
- ● bandanna, thread, needle, pennyroyal
- ○ bandanna, thread, needle, collar
- ○ bandanna, thread, sewing machine, pennyroyal

5 According to the article, which of these shows the correct order of the steps used to make a flea collar?

- ○ Tie → Stuff → Cut → Sew → Fold → Sew
- ○ Cut → Sew → Fold → Stuff → Sew → Tie
- ○ Tie → Sew → Stuff → Cut → Fold → Sew
- ● Cut → Fold → Sew → Stuff → Sew → Tie

6 Look at the picture below.

What does this picture show?

- ○ how to create a hollow tube
- ○ how to stuff a bandanna with pennyroyal
- ○ how to sew the collar together
- ● how to make two triangles from a bandanna

7 The information under the heading "What to Do" tells the reader about

- ○ the different types of pet collars
- ○ the supplies needed to make a pet collar
- ● the directions for making a pet collar
- ○ the kinds of pets that wear collars

8 Which of these could be guide words on a dictionary page that contains the word *pennyroyal?*

- ○ pelican - pencil
- ○ pensive - pepper
- ● penguin - people
- ○ pending - Pennsylvania

9 In a book about plants, which of these chapters would **most likely** tell about pennyroyal?

- ● Useful Herbs
- ○ Evergreen Trees
- ○ Flowering Shrubs
- ○ Seeds and Seed Pods

10 On the lines below, write a paragraph that summarizes the article. Include **three** facts in your summary.

_____

_____

Scoring Guide — CSAP Reading — Grade 4

Pet Collar

Item 10:

On the lines below, write a paragraph that summarizes the article. Include three facts in your summary.

RUBRIC

Exemplar

Facts:

- Fleas seem to hate pennyroyal.
- Collars made with pennyroyal can help keep fleas off pets.
- Humans and animals find pennyroyal sweet smelling.
- Supplies needed for collar:
  - bandanna
  - thread
  - needle
  - pennyroyal
- *Reference to directions in making collar*

Score Points (*2 points maximum*)

2 points	Summary with three or more facts
1 point	Summary with one or two facts given
0 points	Other

Directions

For Numbers 1 through 5, read the letter below and look at the numbered, underlined parts. Choose the answer that shows the best capitalization and punctuation for each part.

(1) March 1 1997

(2) Dear Bonnie

(3) Did I leave my jacket in Tinas' car? I left it either there or on
(4) the airplane write soon.

(5) Your friend
Ken

1
- ○ march 1, 1997
- ● March 1, 1997
- ○ March 1, 1997,
- ○ Correct as it is

2
- ○ dear bonnie
- ○ dear Bonnie,
- ● Dear Bonnie,
- ○ Correct as it is

3
- ○ Tinas
- ○ tina's
- ● Tina's
- ○ Correct as it is

4
- ○ airplane. write
- ● airplane. Write
- ○ airplane? Write
- ○ Correct as it is

5
- ○ Your Friend
- ● Your friend,
- ○ your Friend,
- ○ Correct as it is

Directions

Now do Number 1.

1 Imagine that the school newsletter has asked your class about lunch time at your school. On the lines below, write a paragraph for the school newsletter **explaining** what lunch time at your school is like.

(scoring guide on following page)

CSAP GRADE 4 WRITING

FOUR-POINT RUBRIC

Score Point: 4

The response is clear, focused, and developed for the purpose specified in the prompt. Relevant details and/or anecdotes and word choice support and enrich the central idea, topic, or story line. There are few, if any, errors in language usage, spelling, and mechanics.

Content and Organization

- Supporting details are relevant and provide important information about the topic.
- The writing has balance; the main idea stands out from the details.
- The writer seems in control and develops the topic in a logical, organized way.
- The writer connects ideas to the specified purpose.

Style

- The writer selects words that are accurate, specific, and appropriate for the specified purpose.
- The writer may experiment with words and/or use figurative language and/or imagery.
- The writer uses a variety of sentence structures.
- The writing is readable, neat, and nearly error-free.

Score Point: 3

The response is clear and focused. Ideas are related to the purpose specified in the prompt but may be sketchy or overly general. Relevant details and/or anecdotes and word choice support the topic, theme, or story line but may be limited. Errors in language usage, spelling, and mechanics are minor. One or more of the following problems may be evident.

Content and Organization

- The writer has defined but not thoroughly developed the topic, idea, or story line.
- Some supporting details are relevant but limited, or overly general, or less important.
- The writer makes general observations without using specific details or does not delineate the main idea from the details.
- The writer attempts to develop the topic in an organized way but may falter in either logic or organization.
- The writer connects ideas with the specified topic implicitly rather than explicitly.

Style

- The writer mostly selects words that are accurate, specific, and appropriate for the purpose of the writing.
- The writer uses age-appropriate words that are accurate but may lack precision.
- The writer uses simple but accurate sentence structures.
- The writing is mostly readable and neat.
- Errors in language usage, spelling, and mechanics do not impede communication.

Score Point 2:

The response does not maintain focus or organization throughout. Ideas are minimally related to the purpose specified in the prompt; the reader must make inferences based on sketchy details and inaccurate or nonspecific word choice. There may be some serious errors in language usage, spelling, or mechanics. One or more of the following problems is evident.

Content and Organization

- The writer has attempted to define the topic, idea, or story line but is unclear or sketchy; response may read like a collection of thoughts from which no central idea emerges.
- Supporting details are minimal or irrelevant or no distinction is made between main ideas and details.
- The writer does not develop the topic in an organized way; response may be a list rather than a developed paragraph.
- Ideas are not connected to the specified purpose.

Style

- The writer sometimes selects words that are not accurate, specific, or appropriate for the purpose of the writing.
- Writing may be choppy or repetitive.
- Portions of the writing are unreadable or messy; errors may impede communication in some portions of the response.

Score Point 1:

The response tends to be unfocused and disorganized; there may be severe problems with fluency and/or consistency. Ideas may not be related to the purpose specified in the prompt. Details and/or anecdotes may be irrelevant or too insufficient for the reader to construct meaning. Word choices may not support the topic, theme, or story line or be repetitive or inaccurate. Errors in language usage, spelling, or mechanics may be severe. One or more of the following problems is evident.

Content and Organization

- The writer has not defined the topic, idea, or story line.
- Supporting details are absent.
- Organization is not evident; may be a brief list.
- Ideas are fragmented and unconnected with the specified purpose.

Style

- Much of the writing is unreadable or messy.
- Word choice is inaccurate or there are many repetitions.
- Vocabulary is age inappropriate.
- The writer uses simple, repetitive sentence structures or many sentence fragments.
- Errors severely impede communication.

Score Point 0:

The response is off topic or unreadable.

Questions & Answers

Q: How long do the tests take?
A: Testing times will differ depending on the subjects and grade levels tested. The 4th grade reading and writing test takes approximately six, 50 minute class periods. The 3rd grade reading test is expected to take two, 45 minute class periods. Testing time is spread out over several days.

Q: What stakes are attached?
A: CSAP does not have "high stakes" attached. There are no state-imposed consequences for students, teachers, or administrators tied to the test results. However, school, district, and statewide results will be released to the public and it is likely that the newspapers will print results.

Q: How will I know how to administer the test?
A: Teachers will receive demonstration booklets in advance of the testing date. The booklets thoroughly explain how to administer the tests, contain example test questions, and answer many questions you may have about the test. Your district also has access to statewide training conferences to prepare district staff to train teachers.

Q: Are all students expected to take the test?
A: Every student is expected to take CSAP, with a few exceptions. Students with severe disabilities are not expected to participate. Each school district decides which students are exempted from the exam. Appropriate accommodations, tied to instruction, are allowed to assist special education students in taking the exam.

Q: Is this just another trend that will vanish?
A: As educators, you may have seen many education trends come and go. It may be hard to take content standards seriously due to a belief that "this too shall pass." However, there is strong support among educators, legislators, business leaders, and parents at local, state, and national levels to support a standards-based educational system. A state law passed in 1993 has directed the implementation of state and local content standards and assessments. It is safe to assume that content standards are here to stay.

More Questions & Answers

Q: Is this just one other thing that takes time away from my teaching?
A: Because the statewide assessment is based on content standards, it will compliment instruction. It is not a separate test that will have little effect or meaning to what you're teaching. State test results will give you additional information about students, which when used in combination with your classroom assessments and the district assessment, will provide you with a "body of evidence" about how well students are achieving.

Q: What will be done with the results?
A: It is up to each school district to determine how they will use individual, school, and district scores. Only locally elected school boards may determine graduation requirements, establish school curricula and set policies for grade retention and promotion. Test results will most likely be used to aid teachers and school administrators in improving instruction.

Q: How are the tests scored?
A: Multiple choice questions are scored by a machine. Performance assessments are graded by trained scorers. Scorers are teachers and assessment experts. Extensive training is provided to the scorers and common criteria (rubrics) are used to evaluate student answers to ensure objectivity.

Q: How will student anonymity be protected?
A: Smaller school districts (with 15 or less students per grade) will not have their results released publicly. Results will not be disaggregated for student groups of 15 or less. Only schools and parents will have access to individual student results.

Q: Who can I call if I have more questions?
A: If you have questions about how your individual school or district will handle testing, contact your school principal or district assessment director. If you'd like more information about the Colorado Student Assessment Program, contact the Colorado Department of Education Assessment Unit at (303) 894-2155 or (303) 894-2148.

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